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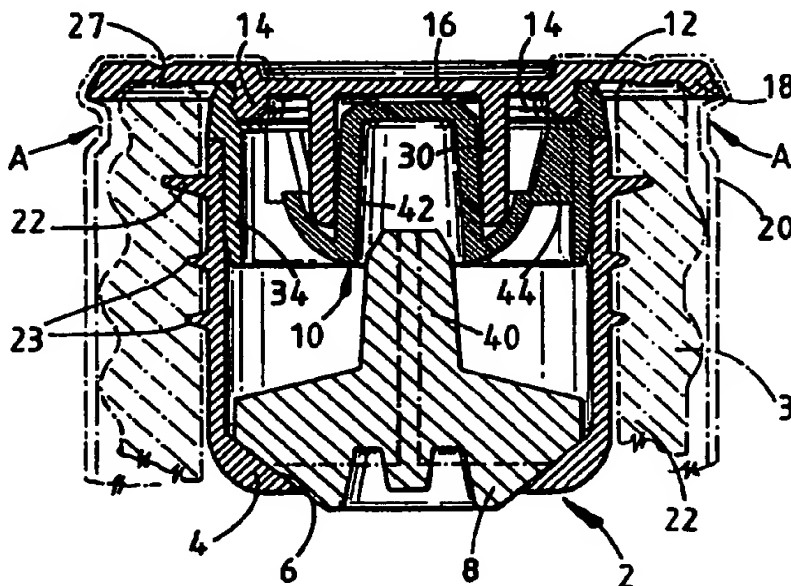
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(54) Title: NON-REFILLING DEVICES



(57) Abstract

The invention relates to a non-refilling device for insertion in the neck portion (3) of a container for liquids for example, fine spirits, the device comprising a sleeve means (4) adapted to be a secure fit within the neck portion (3), a one-way valve arrangement (6, 8), a pouring member (10) and a closure means (16, 20). While the device is being applied to the neck portion of the filled container, all the above components are maintained in an assembled condition by engagement means (28, 32) on the closure means (16) and the pouring member (10). When the container is opened normally, the action of unscrewing the closure means (16, 20) is adequate to overcome the action of the engagement means (28, 32) so that the container may be opened and resealed in a conventional manner.

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NON-REFILLING DEVICES

The invention is concerned with improvements in or relating to non-refilling devices adapted to be secured within the outlet of a container for liquid, for example as an insert in the neck of a bottle.

Devices to prevent refilling of bottles, particularly bottles intended to contain spirits, are well known but although such devices may make it extremely difficult to introduce replacement liquid into the bottle, the manufacture and design of such devices may be complicated and therefore the devices, however desirable, may be expensive to produce.

It is an object of the present invention to provide a device which is effective in use and avoids an excessive cost penalty.

It is a further object of the invention to provide a device that may be applied to a container neck in a combined condition and in a single operational step, thus to improve the speed of operation and the efficiency and versatility of the container filling and closing line.

The invention provides a non-refilling device for insertion within a neck portion of a container for liquids, the device comprising a tubular assembly adapted to be received at least substantially within said neck portion and having engagement means provided on an external surface thereof adapted for firm engagement with an internal surface of said neck portion, said assembly including a sleeve means a lower

end portion of which is directed in use towards the interior of said container, said sleeve means being provided with a valve seat surface, there being provided a valve member adapted to seat against said seat surface in a closed position, said assembly further comprising a pouring member received in a force- or interference-fit within an upper, open end portion of said sleeve means and provided with an annular pouring lip, the device being further provided with a container closure means including an annular sealing surface adapted in use to be in sealing engagement with said container neck portion, said annular sealing surface surrounding an annularly arranged projecting means adapted to engage removably with engagement means provided on the tubular assembly when the device is in a fully assembled condition, the construction and arrangement being such that, prior to use, the device is self-maintaining in said fully assembled condition in which each component thereof is engaged with an adjacent component prior to and during the application of the device to a container neck portion.

Advantageously, said closure means may comprise a cap and an insert secured within the cap, said sealing surface and said annularly arranged projecting means being provided on said insert.

Preferably, said annularly arranged projecting means engages removably with the annular pouring lip of said pouring member.

Conveniently, said pouring member may be provided

with a centrally disposed recessed inner portion adapted to receive and locate said valve member portion, said recessed inner portion being itself received in removable engagement with a second annularly arranged projection means on said closure means.

Advantageously, said valve member may be provided with an axially extending stem portion adapted to be received within a recess provided in the pouring member.

Preferably, said pouring member may comprise at least one zone of weakness in its construction, said zone being arranged to fracture on the application of abnormal pressure associated with tampering prior to an unauthorised attempt to refill the container.

Advantageously, the sleeve means may be provided with a plurality of annular, substantially radially extending, flanges adapted to be deformed when the sleeve inserted into the container neck, to provide a wedging effect rendering the insertion effectively permanent. Conveniently, the flanges may be spaced apart by differing distances therebetween.

Advantageously, one or more flanges, preferably including the uppermost of the flanges, may be of larger diameter than the remainder.

Conveniently, the external surface of the pouring member is provided with annular ribs which are adapted to soften during insertion into the sleeve member and to re-harden in a distorted condition enhancing the permanency of the engagement with the internal surface of the sleeve member.

There will now be described an example of a device according to the invention. It will be understood that the description which is to be read with reference to the drawings is given by way of example only and not by way of limitation.

In the drawings:-

Figure 1 is a longitudinal sectional view through a device according to the invention;

Figure 2 is a side view partly in section of a sleeve member of the device of Figure 1, including a minor modification thereof;

Figure 3 is a sectional view of a sealing insert of the device;

Figures 4 and 5 are full and sectional side views respectively of a pourer member of the device;

Figure 6 is a fragmentary view of a portion of Figure 3 to an enlarged scale;

Figure 7 is a fragmentary view of a portion of Figure 5 to an enlarged scale;

Figure 8 is an underneath plan view of the pourer member;

Figures 9 and 10 are a side view and a perspective view respectively of a valve member;

Figure 11 is an underneath plan view of the valve member; and

Figures 12 and 13 are sections taken on lines XII-XII and XIII-XIII respectively of Figure 11.

The device, 2, according to the invention is intended to be assembled as shown in Figure 1 with its

components in an interengaging relationship such that the device may be applied to a neck portion 3 (shown in chain-dotted line) of a spirits bottle, while the parts comprising the device are maintained in a fully assembled condition in which each part present as a component in the device is held in engagement with an adjacent one of the component parts so that the entire device may be applied to a container neck portion in a single operational movement.

It should be noted that the single movement is similar to that conventionally used in the application of a cap to a container neck, and therefore there is a marked increase in efficiency when that movement can be used to apply all the closure parts in one operational step instead of two or more.

Subsequently to its application to the neck portion 3, the device is operable to enable a closure member thereof to be removed from and replaced on the remainder of the device as will be explained.

The device 2 comprises a tubular sleeve member 4 having a valve seat surface 6 at the lower portion thereof against which is seated a valve member 8. Received in permanent engagement in the upper portion of the sleeve member 4 is a pourer member 10, a pouring lip 12 of which is adapted to engage, but in a removable manner, with an annular projection 14 of a sealing member 16. Outer edge portions 18 of the member 16 are held captive in a formable foil cap 20 which is clenched about the member 16 at A.

Figure 2 shows the sleeve member 4 which in the present example is moulded from low density polyethylene and is provided with annular engagement flanges 22, 23 that extend generally radially from the outer surface at selected levels. In the present example, three such flanges are provided in total, the upper one of which, 22, is of a greater diameter than the flanges 23.

Figure 2 also shows at the right-hand side thereof an arrangement in which three flanges 22, 23' and 23" are of decreasing width the smallest 23" being free-standing and the flanges 22 and 23' being joined at four equidistantly spaced regions by a web member 25 if enhancement of the rigidity of the flanges is deemed advantageous. In another modification, the lower flange 23" may be used as a wiping blade to remove traces of liquid from the surface of the glass that may otherwise interfere with the secure fit of the member 4 in the neck 3.

However, all the flanges may, if preferred, be of the same diameter and may, for example, total three, four or five in number.

When the fully assembled device is inserted within the bottle neck 3 the flanges 22, 23 are forced upwardly and inwardly (see arrow B) so as to form an effectively immovable insert in the open mouth of the bottle. The flange 22, being of larger diameter than the remainder of the flanges 23, provides an enhanced grip. The bottle is in fact closed by contact of the sealing member 16 with an upper edge surface of the neck portion

3. The sealing member 16 as shown in Figures 3 and 6 comprises a disc-like body member 24 having its outer edge portions 18 formed into a downwardly and outwardly turned flange 19. A sealing surface 26 intended to contact the neck portion 3 surrounds the first projecting means 14 which has an outwardly facing ridge 28. A shallow ridge 27 is formed in the surface 26, conveniently provided by an annular undulation formed in the member. This feature may be found to provide a degree of resilience in the member 16 which is capable of absorbing a portion of the force receiving during application of the closure to the bottle neck. This acts to reduce any tendency for the closure to be deformed or to release from the bottle lip, thus compromising the efficiency of the seal formed. It will be understood that additional sealing ribs may be provided if thought necessary. Within the circumference of the first projecting means is a second, deeper, projecting means 30. The purpose of these projecting means will be described below.

Figure 4 illustrates the pourer member 10, while Figure 5 shows a sectional view in which an annular internal rib 32 on the lip 12 can be seen. The member 10 is moulded from polystyrene in the present example but it will be understood that any suitable rigid material may be used that has the necessary heat-resistant properties for example a thermosetting plastics material or a ceramic. When the component parts of the device are engaged together prior to its

application to the neck portion 3 of a filled bottle of, for example, spirits, the ridge 28 being of a diameter slightly greater than that of the annular rib 32, when pressed axially into overlapping contact with the latter in assembly, becomes held in positive engagement therewith. Thus, the sealing member 16 is held in a self-maintaining assembled condition with respect to the other component members of the device, i.e. the pourer member and the valve means, whilst the device is applied to the neck portion 3 in an axial direction. However, in normal use by the consumer, the actions of removing and re-applying on of the closure means (sealing member 16 and the cap 20) with respect to the pour member 10 are carried out in an at least part-helical movement with normal manual force which is sufficient to permit dis-engagement of the rib 32 and the ridge 28. In an alternative modification, the ridge 28 and the rib 32 may be formed in a helical manner, conveniently at the same inclination as that of the thread formation on the bottle neck 3, so that the turning action of removing the closure facilitates the ready dis-engagement of the ridge 28 and the rib 32.

Provided on the external surface of a body portion 34 of the member 10 are a plurality, in this case four, of narrow ribs 36 which enhance the permanence of the fit between the pourer member 10 and the sleeve member 4 into which it is forced. The ribs 36 engage with corresponding ribs 38 formed on the interior surface of the sleeve member 4 (see Figure 2) in such a manner that

dis-assembly is in effect impossible under most conditions. The result is that the valve member is captive but movable within the space enclosed by the members 4 and 10.

In order to ensure correct alignment of the movable valve member 8 with the seating surface 6, the member 8 is provided with a stem portion 40 having stabilising vanes 41 and which is received in a loose fit within a recessed inner portion 42 of the pourer member 10. The portion 42 is linked with the tubular portion by five link members 44 (see Figure 9 for example) and, when the device is assembled, is itself received within the annular projecting means 30. This acts to stabilise the assembly in a lateral direction to resist the possibility of the components of the device becoming off-centre or out of alignment at any time after assembly. Ribs 46 enhance the locating action of the projecting means 30 on the portion 42, which in turn ensures proper location of the valve member 8.

The valve member 8, as can be seen in Figure 1, is in contact with the valve seat surface 6 when the bottle is in a generally upright condition. This seating effect may be enhanced by the provision of a saucer-like portion 50 around the member which in practice traps a small quantity of liquid adding to the effective weight of the valve member. Thus, re-filling is rendered extremely difficult, although inversion of the bottle in normal use causes the valve member to fall away from the seat surface 6 and permit a normal pouring out action

CLAIMS:

1. A non-refilling device for insertion with a neck portion of a container for liquids, the device comprising a tubular assembly adapted to be received at least substantially within said neck portion and having engagement means provided on an external surface thereof adapted for firm engagement with an internal surface of said neck portion, said assembly including a sleeve means a lower end portion of which is directed in use towards the interior of said container, said sleeve means being provided with a valve seat surface, there being provided a valve member adapted to seat against said seat surface in a closed position, said assembly further comprising a pouring member received in a force- or interference-fit within an upper, open end portion of said sleeve means and provided with an annular pouring lip, the device being further provided with a container closure means including an annular sealing surface adapted in use to be in sealing engagement with said container neck portion, said annular sealing surface surrounding an annularly arranged projecting means adapted to engage removably with engagement means provided on the tubular assembly when the device is in a fully assembled condition, the construction and arrangement being such that, prior to use, the device is self-maintaining in

said fully assembled condition in which each component thereof is engaged with an adjacent component prior to and during the application of the device to a container neck portion.

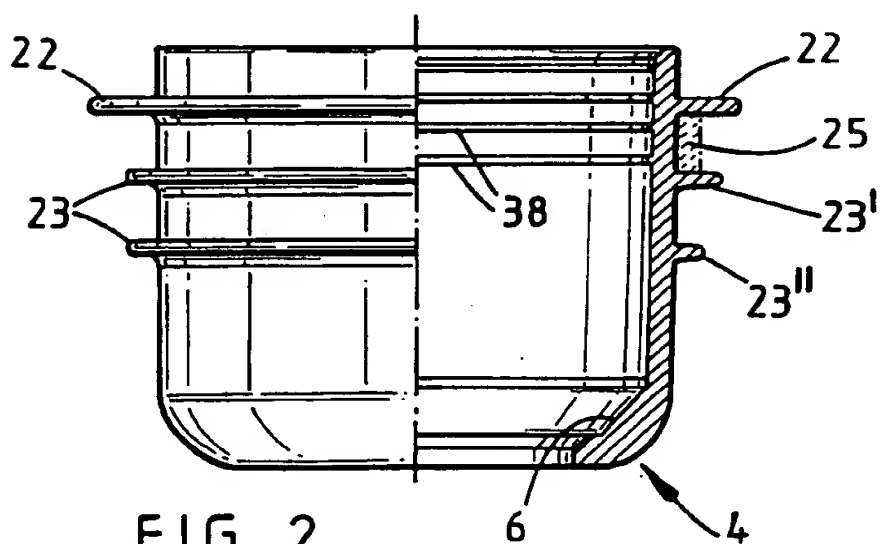
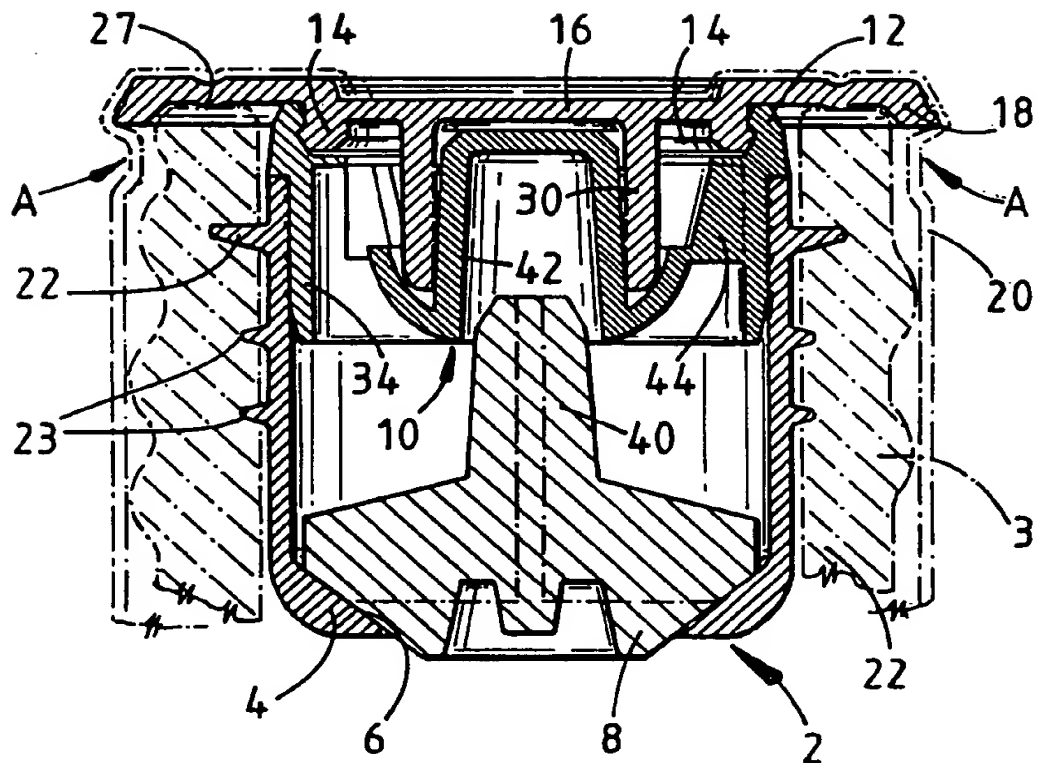
2. A device as claimed in claim 1, wherein said closure means comprises a cap and an insert secured within the cap, said sealing surface and said annularly arranged projecting means engaging removably with the annular pouring lip of said pouring member.
3. A device as claimed in either one of claims 1 and 2, wherein a ridge or rib is provided upon one of said annular pouring lip and said first mentioned annularly arranged projecting means, said ridge being adapted to engage with a rib or ridge provided upon the other of said annular pouring lip and said first mentioned annularly arranged projecting means.
4. A device as claimed in claim 3, wherein said ribs or ridges are formed as part-helical interengaging means.
5. A device as claimed in claim 2, wherein said pouring member is provided with a centrally disposed recessed inner portion adapted to receive and locate said valve member, said recessed inner

portion being itself received in removable engagement with a second annularly arranged projection means on said closure means.

6. A device as claimed in claim 5, wherein said valve member is provided with an axially arranged stem portion adapted to be received within said recessed portion of the pouring member.
7. A device as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, wherein the sleeve means is provided with a plurality of annular, substantially radially extending, flanges adapted to be deformed when the sleeve inserted into the container neck, to provide a wedging effect rendering the insertion effectively permanent.
8. A device as claimed in claim 7, wherein the flanges are spaced apart by differing distances therebetween.
9. A device as claimed in either one of claims 7 and 8, wherein one or more flanges are of larger diameter than the remainder.
10. A device as claimed in claim 9, wherein the uppermost of the flanges is of larger diameter than said remainder.

11. A device as claimed in any one of claims 7 to 10, wherein the flanges are reinforced by the provision of web members therebetween.
12. A device as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, wherein the external surface of the pouring member is provided with annular ribs which are adapted to soften during insertion into the sleeve member and to re-harden in a distorted condition enhancing the permanency of the engagement with the internal surface of the sleeve member.
13. A device as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, wherein at least one zone of weakness is provided in the structure of the pouring member, said zone fracturing to display damage caused by tampering with for purposes of re-filling the container.

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No.

GB 95/01733

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
IPC 6 B65D49/04

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

IPC 6 B65D

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	US,A,4 258 854 (WRIGHT) 31 March 1981 see the whole document ---	1,7
X A	FR,A,2 248 984 (PRIMPIED) 23 May 1975 see the whole document ---	1,7 5,6
X	GB,A,2 026 428 (DA COSTA ET AL) 6 February 1980 see abstract; figures ---	1
A	EP,A,0 571 070 (MCG CLOSURES LIMITED) 24 November 1993 see abstract; figures -----	1

☐ Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C.

☒ Patent family members are listed in annex.

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Date of the actual completion of the international search

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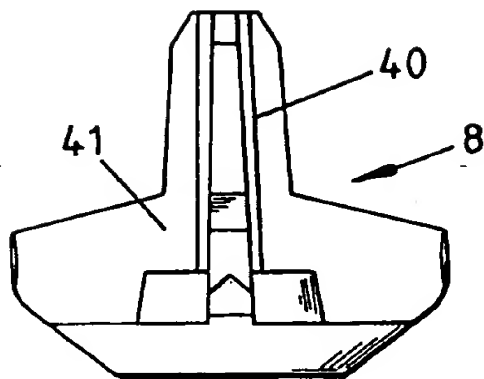


FIG. 9

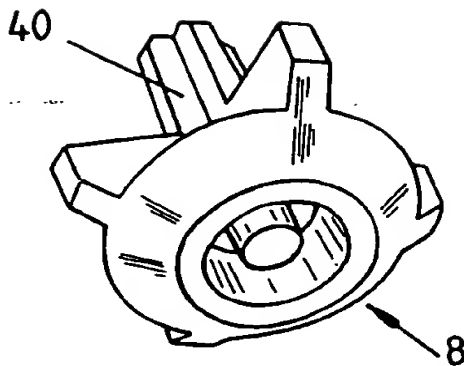


FIG. 10

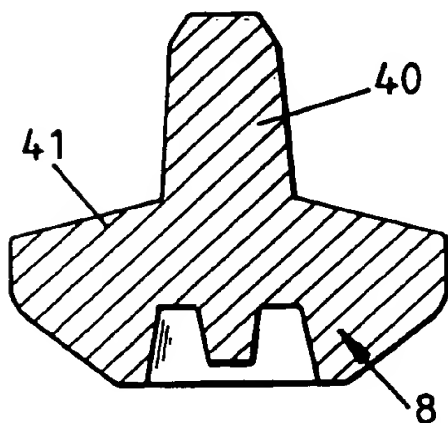


FIG. 12

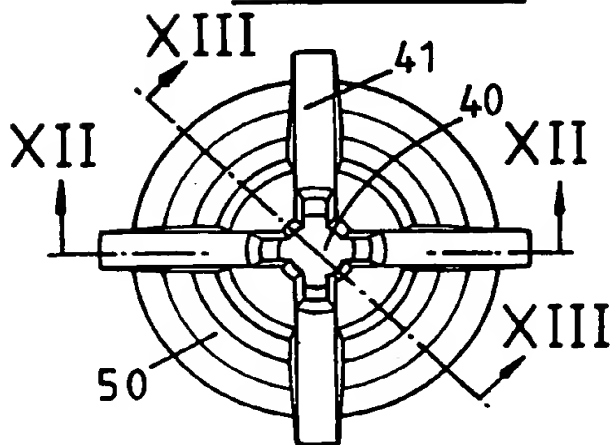


FIG. 11

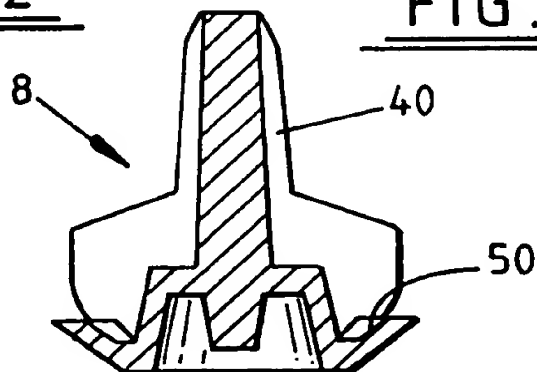


FIG. 13

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information on patent family members

International Application No

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US-A-4258854	31-03-81	NONE	
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